



GAIL FARBER, Director

# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"*

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IN REPLY PLEASE

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April 14, 2011

TO: Each Supervisor  
FROM:   
Gail Farber  
Director of Public Works

### **REPORT ON SHARPS WASTE COLLECTION AT COUNTY FACILITIES BOARD MOTION OF OCTOBER 13, 2009, AGENDA ITEM 10**

On October 13, 2009, your Board directed the Department of Public Works to work in collaboration with the Directors of Health Services, Community and Senior Services, Public Health, and the Fire Chief of the Fire Department to pursue the following actions:

- 1 Identify and evaluate the potential for utilizing additional County facilities, such as fire stations, pharmacies, hospitals, and other locations, at sharps collection sites;
- 2 Implement collection sites at the most feasible locations on a 12-month trial basis with costs equitably shared amongst participating departments;
- 3 Assess the feasibility of providing approved mail-back containers to assist the elderly, disabled, and others who are unable to utilize the County's expanded network of sharps collection sites; and
- 4 Submit a report to the Board within 18 months summarizing the results of this effort.

This memorandum provides a summary of the actions taken by Public Works in collaboration with Health Services, Public Health, Community and Senior Services, Sheriff, and Fire Departments (Working Group), in response to the Board's direction. This includes the evaluation and identification of potential locations for sharps collection sites, preliminary results, and recommendations. A more detailed discussion is provided in the attached Report.

### **Evaluation, Identification, and Siting of Sharps Collection Centers**

Public Works, in conjunction with the Working Group, identified and evaluated potential locations for suitability as sharps collection sites. The Working Group concluded that designated Public Health clinics, Health Services' health centers, and Sheriff's stations are most suitable for the establishment of sharps collection sites. Community and

Senior Services' facilities as well as Fire Stations were deemed to be less suitable due primarily to safety and traffic concerns.

### **Pilot Sharps Collection Locations and Preliminary Results**

Pursuant to the Board's direction, Health Services identified and implemented a pilot sharps collection site at its Wilmington Health Center. Concurrently, the Sheriff's Department launched the Safe Drug Drop-off Program, which included a sharps collection component. This was done initially at the Lomita Sheriff's station and was subsequently expanded to include a total of 20 Sheriff stations.

These additions doubled the number of sharps collection sites available to residents Countywide to a total of 42 sites. These sites, in addition to the weekly household hazardous waste collection events conducted by Public Works, in concert with the County Sanitation Districts, provide significantly enhanced convenience for residents to properly manage their home-generated sharps waste.

These expansion efforts have been very successful. In 2010, approximately 30,000 pounds of home-generated sharps waste were collected through Public Works' collection events and the Sheriff's drop-off sites (a 50 percent increase over 2009).

### **Mail-Back Containers**

Due to the high cost of mail-back containers, limited funding, and legal limitations on the screening of participants for eligibility (pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act), the Working Group concluded that a permanent, Countywide mail-back program is not feasible at this time. However, as discussed in the Report, the mail-back programs for elderly and disabled residents in the unincorporated areas are gradually being provided through residential solid waste collection franchise agreements.

### **Recommendations**

The following actions are recommended by the Working Group in light of the findings and initial results of the efforts undertaken pursuant to the Board's direction:

- Continue to operate sharps collection sites at the designated Sheriff's stations and County health clinics. As discussed in the Report, funding would continue to be provided by the individual departments for the programs and/or contracts that they currently administer. Public Works would continue to administer and fund the contract for collection and disposal of sharps waste at the Sheriff stations.
- Public Works to continue to incorporate sharps collection programs, including a mail-back component into residential solid waste collection franchise agreements as franchises in the unincorporated County areas are established or renewed.

- Public Works, in concert with Public Health, Health Services, and other partners, to continue to conduct and enhance educational efforts to inform County residents about the proper management of sharps waste and the resources available to assist them in this effort.
- Continue to support and promote legislation that would encourage manufacturers to take more responsibility for the end-use management of sharps they produce.
- Public Works to continue to look for innovative partnerships and grant opportunities to further enhance home-generated sharps waste management programs.

These collective actions will significantly assist in protecting public health and the environment, thereby, improving the quality of life of County residents.

Finally, it is our pleasure to inform you that CalRecycle recently honored Los Angeles County's Home-Generated Sharps Waste Management Program with the Best New Program Award at its 2011 Used Oil/HHW Training and Conference. We are encouraged by this recognition and are committed to continued enhancement of the Program for the benefit of our communities.

If you have any questions, please contact me or your staff may call Pat Proano, Assistant Deputy Director, at (626) 458-3500.

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Attach.

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Department of Health Services (Elizabeth Augusta, Phillip Moore)  
Department of Public Health (David Caley)  
Fire Department (Terry Millsaps)  
Sheriff Department (Alissa Dedmon)

## **REPORT ON HOME-GENERATED SHARPS WASTE COLLECTION AT COUNTY FACILITIES**

On October 13, 2009, the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors directed the Department of Public Works to work in collaboration with the Directors of Health Services, Community and Senior Services, Public Health, and the Fire Chief of the Fire Department to pursue the following actions.

- 1 Identify and evaluate the potential for utilizing additional County facilities, such as fire stations, pharmacies, hospitals, and other locations, at sharps collection sites;
2. Implement collection sites at the most feasible locations on a 12-month trial basis with costs equitably shared amongst participating departments;
3. Assess the feasibility of providing approved mail-back containers to assist the elderly, disabled, and others who are unable to utilize the County's expanded network of sharps collection sites; and
- 4 Submit a report to the Board within 18 months summarizing the results of this effort. The report should include, but not be limited to, the following:
  - a. Success of the trial collection sites in enhancing the Program
  - b. Barriers/challenges faced
  - c. Public Outreach and education implemented
  - d. Cost analysis
  - e. Recommendations on making collection sites permanent, further expanding collection and other adjustments to the program.

This report discusses the actions taken by Public Works, in collaboration with Health Services, Public Health, Community and Senior Services, Sheriff, and Fire Departments (Working Group), in response to the Board's direction. This includes the evaluation and identification of potential locations for sharps collection sites, preliminary results, and recommendations.

### **BACKGROUND**

Effective September 2008, State law (Senate Bill 1305) made it illegal to place home-generated sharps waste in the trash or recycling bin. The law also requires that sharps waste be transported in State-approved sharps containers. The enactment of this law created a pressing need to provide convenient outlets for residents to properly manage their sharps waste. Home-generated sharps waste includes hypodermic needles, pen needles, intravenous needles, lancets, and other devices that are used to penetrate the skin for the delivery of medications derived from a household.

In an effort to assist residents to comply with the law, in July 2008, Public Works launched the Home-Generated Sharps Waste Management Program (Sharps Program) utilizing State grant funds supplemented with landfill tipping fee revenues. Through the Sharps Program, Public Works in collaboration with the City of West Covina, established several locations throughout the County for residents to obtain free sharps containers (distribution sites), as well as locations for residents to properly drop off their filled sharps containers (collection sites) free of charge.

## **REPORT ON HOME-GENERATED SHARPS WASTE COLLECTION AT COUNTY FACILITIES**

Prior to the Board's October 13, 2009, motion, Public Works had started working with several partners, such as the County Department of Public Health and some cities, to establish convenient sites for the collection of home-generated sharps waste at their facilities and distribution of sharps containers. Public Health assisted Public Works in this effort by designating 14 of its public health clinics to serve as distribution sites to provide free sharps containers to residents, as well as collection sites for the filled sharps containers. Costs associated with the Program were integrated into Public Health's existing disposal system used for the internally generated infectious waste at their health clinics. Public Health reaches over 250,000 individual patients each year through its health clinics.

Other collection sites established prior to the motion included six permanent Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection centers operated by the City of Los Angeles and available to residents Countywide through an agreement with the County, a permanent HHW collection center operated by the City of Santa Monica, the County's permanent HHW collection center in the Antelope Valley, and the County's numerous mobile collection events held throughout the County

Due to the large size of the County, and to fill in service gaps that create further convenience to residents, Public Works continued looking for new partnership opportunities for safe and convenient collection of home-generated sharps waste. Recognizing the need for further expansion of this service, the Board adopted the October 13, 2009, motion (See Enclosure I)

### **WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES**

#### **Evaluation, Identification, and Challenges in Siting of Sharps Collection Centers at County Facilities**

Public Works convened the Working Group (see Enclosure II) for the participating departments to meet regularly and discuss the goals and objectives outlined in the motion.

The Working Group assessed potential locations at the departments' facilities to determine their feasibility for use as collection sites.

- Public Works did not have any new sites to consider but continued to offer its weekly mobile collection events (over 60 annually) and the Antelope Valley Environmental Collection Center as sharps container distribution as well as collection sites. Public Works also partnered up with the Sheriff's Department to administer and fund the disposal of home-generated sharps waste at 20 Sheriff Stations throughout the County
- On a parallel track, in September 2009, the Sheriff's Department (Sheriff's) launched the Safe Drug Drop-Off Program providing designated Sheriff's stations

## **REPORT ON HOME-GENERATED SHARPS WASTE COLLECTION AT COUNTY FACILITIES**

with self-serve drop boxes for the collection of home-generated sharps waste and home-generated pharmaceutical waste. The Sheriff's Program was established to provide an opportunity for residents to safely and anonymously drop-off expired or unused drugs, sharps waste, and other controlled substances. This program was initially established at the Sheriff's Lomita Station and was subsequently expanded to include a total of 20 locations.

Recognizing the significant contribution of the Sheriff's Program to achieving the objective of the Motion, Public Works and the Sheriff's teamed up in an effort to integrate the Sheriff's sharps program into Public Works' Countywide Home-Generated Sharps Waste Management Program. As a result, Public Works assumed administration of the contract to manage the home-generated sharps waste collected at the designated Sheriff's stations. The annual cost of this contract is approximately \$40,000. The Sheriff's will continue offering the designated Sheriff's stations as sharps waste collection sites and assisting with public outreach and education efforts.

- The Department of Health Services (Health Services) identified and implemented a pilot collection location at the Wilmington Health Center starting April 2010. The center was feasible for a pilot program because of its small size which allowed for a controlled service area. The center was set up to offer residents a convenient outlet to properly dispose of their sharps waste, as well as the opportunity to conveniently receive a free sharps container. Health Services was able to easily integrate costs associated with sharps collection under this program into their existing disposal system used for internally-generated infectious waste at its health clinics.

Furthermore, Health Services did not find its pharmacies feasible as sharps collection sites, due to safety and liability concerns, and the need to maintain a clean pharmacy environment. Health Services was equally concerned with experiencing an increased numbers of visitors at their hospitals, pharmacies, and high traffic clinics. Health Services estimates that 700,000 patients are seen annually at their facilities and with shortage of staff, and parking space, Health Services did not find it feasible to have a pilot sharps collection site at these high-traffic service areas.

- The Department of Public Health did not have additional clinics to offer but further committed to being a permanent partner through the already established 14 clinics as distribution and collection sites.
- The Department of Community and Senior Services (CSS) was unable to identify a facility as a potential pilot location. Due to the usage demographics of the centers, CSS felt that the collection of sharps waste at their facilities would pose a safety hazard to the participants. Community and Senior Services expressed concerns about potential liability issues directly related to the health and safety of participants coming within a close proximity of sharps waste collected at their

## REPORT ON HOME-GENERATED SHARPS WASTE COLLECTION AT COUNTY FACILITIES

centers. Community and Senior Services reported that patrons are mainly children and elderly residents and felt that community and senior centers were not conducive for the collection of sharps waste.

- The Fire Department initially identified five of their stations as potential collection sites. However, upon further study and due to funding limitations as well as safety concerns, a pilot location was not established to serve the purposes of the motion. However, for their own internal needs, the Fire Department was able to secure a contract to utilize 22 of their Battalion Headquarters sites as sharps waste disposal sites for their Paramedic Squads only. These locations are not available for public use.

### PILOT SHARPS COLLECTION LOCATIONS AND PRELIMINARY RESULTS

The implementation of the Sharps Board Motion has been highly successful and well received by the residents of the County. Together with Health Services and the Sheriff's, a total of 21 new sharps waste collection sites at County facilities were added to the Sharps Program.

#### Wilmington Health Center

The new location at the Wilmington Health Center in Wilmington, California offered by the Health Department has proved to be feasible as a collection site for the home-generated sharps waste. The Program was easily integrated into the Department's existing disposal system already in place for the internally generated infectious waste at the health center. Due to shortage of staff, the Department has not been able to properly track usage of this service by the public. However, Health Services has not reported any issues associated with this service at the center.

#### Sheriff Stations

The 20 Sheriff Stations throughout the County have proved to be extremely advantageous to the public. The centers are located widespread throughout the County in the following cities and communities:

Sheriff's Site/City Name	Supervisory District
East Los Angeles Station, Los Angeles	1
Industry Station, Industry	1
Pico Rivera Station, Pico Rivera	1
Walnut Station, Walnut	1
Carson Station, Carson	2
Century Station, Lynwood	2
Compton Station, Compton	2
South Los Angeles Station, Los Angeles	2
Malibu/Lost Hills Station, Calabasas	3

## **REPORT ON HOME-GENERATED SHARPS WASTE COLLECTION AT COUNTY FACILITIES**

West Hollywood Station, West Hollywood	3
Lakewood Station, Lakewood	4
Lomita Station, Lomita	4
Marina Del Rey Station, Marina Del Rey	4
Norwalk Station, Norwalk	4
Palmdale Station, Palmdale	5
San Dimas Station, San Dimas	5
Santa Clarita Station, Valencia	5
Lancaster Station, Lancaster	5
Temple Station, Temple City	5
Crescenta Valley Station, La Crescenta	5

On average, 850 pounds of sharps waste are collected from these stations each month. The self-serve drop boxes at these stations have proved to be feasible and convenient.

These locations were established for the purposes of home-generated sharps waste disposal and to be used by residents only. A challenge the Sheriff's Department encountered is the apparent use by some private clinics of these boxes as a means of disposing of their sharps waste. Public Works and the Sheriff's Departments will continue to work together to educate the public on this matter, to deter businesses from improperly using these venues for their disposal needs. This is important in order to continue offering these free services to the public without burdening public funds.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION EFFORTS**

Through effective outreach campaign efforts, millions of County residents were reached and educated on the proper disposal of home-generated sharps waste. Public Works distributed program specific brochures and posters to all the participating departments to make available at their designated facilities. Information was posted on various department websites.

Community and Senior Services has been very instrumental with outreach efforts at their 14 community and senior centers. Brochures were posted, public presentations were conducted by Public Works' staff, flyers were distributed to the participants, and CSS's own mobile Information Van staff handed out program material at multiple events. Community and Senior Services estimated reaching over 300,000 residents through their outreach efforts. In addition, CSS and Public Works hosted a booth at the 2010 Diabetes Expo and reached approximately 8,500 attendees.

Coordinated public outreach and education for the program will be continuous with the Working Group and will include newsletter articles in various County circulations. Community and Senior Services will continue distributing outreach materials at their 14 centers and through their Information Van, and offer more opportunities to conduct presentations at individual centers and at special events. Public Works will also continue distributing brochures at its weekly mobile HHW collection events reaching approximately 60,000 households annually.



# **REPORT ON HOME-GENERATED SHARPS WASTE COLLECTION AT COUNTY FACILITIES**

## **MAIL-BACK CONTAINER FEASIBILITY**

Due to several barriers, including limited funding and participant screening issues, the Working Group concluded that it was not feasible to provide a mail-back program. This program would primarily assist the elderly, disabled, and others who are unable to utilize the County's expanded network of sharps collection sites.

Initially, as a pilot program, Public Works received grant funding to purchase a limited number of mail-back containers. In administering this service for nearly three years, Public Works, along with the Working Group, assessed that the Program would be costly to sustain. The mail-back containers cost about \$20 each, as they are postage pre-paid. To date, over 2,200 containers have been distributed at a cost of about \$44,000. Only 500 of the containers have been mailed back for proper disposal.

Currently, through the County Franchise services, the residents in the unincorporated communities of Rowland Heights, Hacienda Heights, and Citrus are offered a mail-back sharps waste disposal program. The programs in these communities are supplemented through the franchise fees.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

As a result of this coordinated effort, the County expanded the number of sharps collection sites available to residents Countywide to a total of 42 sites (see Enclosure III). These locations, together with the weekly household hazardous waste collection events conducted by Public Works in concert with the County Sanitation Districts, provide significantly enhanced convenience for residents to properly manage their home-generated sharps waste.

The Working Group recommends the following actions:

- The County should permanently secure the 21 newly established locations through the Sheriff's and the Health Departments. So far these locations have been well utilized; are cost effective and convenient to residents. These locations are uniformly spread throughout the County and are able to fill service gaps to the originally established program.
- The County should continue offering a collaborative and comprehensive public education utilizing County newsletters, websites, community events, and other suitable means as feasible. This will ensure a uniform regional message on the proper disposal of home-generated sharps waste in the County.
- To fill in service gaps and enhance services in the unincorporated communities, the County shall continue to integrate home-generated sharps waste management programs into future franchise agreements. Currently, the residents in the unincorporated communities of Rowland Heights, Hacienda Heights, Citrus, and

## **REPORT ON HOME-GENERATED SHARPS WASTE COLLECTION AT COUNTY FACILITIES**

Santa Clarita have sharps disposal services available to them through the franchise services.

- Continue to examine alternative funding sources and grant opportunities to offset costs for the program.
- Continue to support producer responsibility bills to establish responsibility and take back programs by the vendors and manufacturers that sell pharmaceutical products.
- Additionally, Health Services and Public Health should utilize their buying power in an effort to support producer responsibility by working with the vendors and manufacturers that sell pharmaceutical products to the County to negotiate the take back of home-generated sharps waste as well as unused/expired pharmaceuticals and medication.

### **OVERALL PROGRAM**

The newly expanded Program has been recognized by the State of California as the Best New Program for its innovative collaborative partnerships and creative approach to protecting public health and safety (see Attachment IV). The Program started as a partnership with the City of West Covina and it has since expanded to include 15 more cities, the Sheriff's Department, the County Public Health Department, Health Services, Community and Senior Services, and other public/private organizations. Currently, the Program offers residents over 100 free and convenient outlets to properly dispose of sharps waste, as well as free containers to properly collect and transport sharps waste. Over 150 distribution sites have been designated through the Program and over 20,000 sharps waste containers have been distributed.

In conclusion, the efforts behind this collaborative effort resulted in significant cost savings by reducing needle-stick injuries (which costs millions of dollars to treat) and the cost to clean up illegally dumped sharps waste.

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AGN NO \_\_\_\_\_

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR DON KNABE

October 13, 2009

Everyday in the County of Los Angeles millions of home-generated sharps waste such as medical needles, lancets, and syringes are produced by individuals who self administer medications at home. If disposed of improperly, sharps waste poses a significant health risk to everyone, especially sanitation and landfill workers. In addition, surface waters, groundwater, and the ocean may be polluted as a result of leakage from leftover liquid in sharps devices.

Since last September, State law (SB 1305) prohibits the placement of home-generated sharps waste in trash and recycling containers, and requires the use of State-approved containers for the collection and transportation of sharps waste. State law also encourages local governments to implement and promote sharps collection programs to provide convenient and safe means for residents to dispose of their sharps waste.

To assist residents in complying with this new State law, in June 2008 Public Works in concert with Public Health and participating cities launched a new Sharps

( M O R E )

MOTION

MOLINA \_\_\_\_\_

RIDLEY THOMAS \_\_\_\_\_

YAROSLAVSKY \_\_\_\_\_

ANTONOVICH \_\_\_\_\_

KNABE \_\_\_\_\_

Waste Management Program The aim of the Program is to make it as convenient as possible for residents to properly dispose of their sharps waste. Through this Program, Public Works provides State-approved, puncture-proof containers for residents to safely collect their sharps waste. These containers can be obtained free of charge at over 100 distribution sites.

Once filled, the sharps containers can be taken to designated collection sites for safe disposal. Designated collection sites currently include 8 permanent household hazardous waste collection centers and the County's weekly household hazardous waste collection events. In addition, the Department of Public Health took a proactive approach in joining Public Work's efforts to make available 14 public health clinics as collection sites for County residents to dispose of sharps waste. The disposal cost for the sharps waste is incurred by Public Health as part of their existing internal sharps waste program. In collaboration, Public Works assists with providing sharps containers for distribution, as well as outreach materials for public education. This collaborative partnership is a great example of departments working together to provide beneficial public service to the communities. Considering the size and population of Los Angeles County however, there is a need to expand the number of sites where residents can take their filled sharps containers. To the extent feasible, we should utilize County facilities for this purpose.

Certain County departments, such as the Fire Department, also have a need for proper disposal outlets for the sharps waste they collect when they treat patients through their emergency services. Thus, opportunities exist for additional collaborative

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partnerships between Public Works and other County departments for properly managing sharps waste and increasing public awareness.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors instruct the Director of Public Works, working in collaboration with the Directors of Health Services, Community and Senior Services, Public Health and the Fire Chief of the Fire Department to pursue the following actions

- 1 Identify and evaluate the potential for utilizing additional County facilities, such as fire stations, pharmacies, hospitals, and other locations, as sharps collection sites.
2. Implement collection sites at the most feasible locations on a 12-month trial basis, based on the Public Health model highlighted above. Costs should be equitably shared amongst participating departments.
- 3 Assess the feasibility of providing approved mail-back containers to assist the elderly, disabled, and others who are unable to utilize the County's expanded network of sharps collection sites.
- 4 Submit a report to the Board within 18 months summarizing the results of this effort. The report should include but not be limited to the following
  - a Success of the trial collection sites in enhancing the Program
  - b Barriers/challenges faced
  - c Public outreach and education implemented
  - d Cost analysis
  - e Recommendations on making collection sites permanent, further expanding collection and other adjustments to the Program.

# County of Los Angeles Home-Generated Sharps Waste Management Program

Enclosure II

## Sharps Waste Management Working Group Contact Sheet

### Sharps Waste Motion Contact List

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# Home-Generated Sharps Waste Management Program Permanent Collection Sites



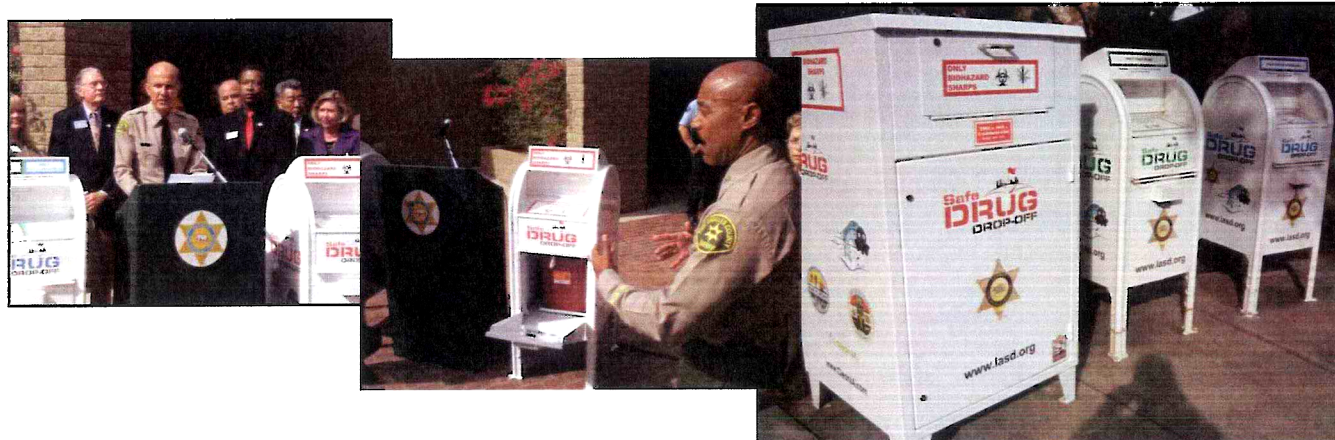


County of Los Angeles  
Home-Generated Sharps Waste Management Program

## INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS



As a partner, the Department of Public Health opened up its 14 public health clinics for County residents to conveniently and safely dispose of sharps waste and have easy access to obtaining new sharps containers.



The collaborative partnership with the County Sheriff's Department encourages residents to anonymously dispose of home-generated sharps waste at 20 Sheriff's Stations throughout the County.